



Habib Ali al-Jifri on:
Turning Anger into Action

London, 5 February 2009

He said, when we were outside, after praising God and sending peace and salutations and blessings upon the Messenger of God, that we were complaining about the cold and that perhaps it would make us sympathise with our brothers in Gaza, who are experiencing the cold without shelter. And now we are experiencing some of this heat, and perhaps it will remind us of the heat that our brothers in Gaza experience in the summer months. And maybe also it will be like a balsam to the heat going on inside us.

Praise be to God, and blessings and peace be upon Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jesus and Muhammad, peace and blessings upon all of them. God reveals in the Qur'an that 'We wanted to reveal our favour to those who are meek on the Earth, and make them into leaders.' And He said that 'if you see the impotence and the weakness manifest more intensely in a people who have received a message from heaven, then know that it's the beginning of them having leadership of 'imama' conferred upon them.'

When the Pharaoh's oppression of the Israelites became more and more intense, it was the beginning of them being made into inheritors of the Earth. Before they had given the imamate the leadership, and put into a position of authority, they went through a lot of oppression and hardship. And just before their opening came to them, the Israelite nation was oppressed by the Pharaoh and his people, to the point that every male son born to them was killed: this was the event proceeding the birth of Moses. When the criminals amongst the Jews who decided to betray Christ and his disciples enveloped Christ and his disciples, it was the beginning of the spread of Christianity to all corners of the Earth. Before this imamate, this authority is given to people outwardly, and we see it manifest, it begins to show in the hearts of the people that receive it, in the inward beings of people who are chosen by God to take on this job. God chose the people who carry this, and the people who take charge of this responsibility will be people who He described as meek towards the believers, strong before the people who disbelieve. This is their state or attribute whether they are in conflict or otherwise. Their states and their attributes do not change, and these people are described as beloved to God, and loving of God. And the attributes of the believers don't change, even when they have no choice to resolve a conflict except by armed means. God says in the Qur'an 'It is written for you that you must fight even though you hate it' and that's the attribute in their heart: their hate to go into conflict, their hate to fight.

Before we start speaking about the attributes of the believers and the people who will be chosen by God and before we talk about changing circumstances, we need to first take appraisal of our current situation. Part of it we can see in the media, pure innocent blood being shed. We see women, children, old people and sick people being killed, being wounded, being displaced and being terrorised. Before the eyes and ears of the whole world. The world we now call civilised or advanced, that talks about human rights, the rights of women, peace, children, the right of international law and every other right we hear about, the world that unleashed a war with no holding back, in the name of 'the war against terrorism'. We all agree that we should fight the terrorism that kills innocence, we are all against al Qaeda, we stood against and condemned the destruction of the twin towers, we condemned the events of

7/7, we considerate it a crime. Not because of any pressure and not to appease anyone but because of our principles and our faith, we condemn those actions. But we know that in this campaign that we have seen in Gaza in the last few weeks, more innocent civilians have been killed than al Qaeda has killed in its entire history. So where is this war on terror? It seems like the world stands and sits down for the rule of law only selectively, and in the name of justice only selectively. Where was the rest of the world when it comes to wanting justice? Where is the law today? Only a few days ago, the high court in Israel drafted a law saying it was ok to totally destroy a Palestinian village, displace its entire population in order to expand the already existing settlement in the area. What is everyone going to do? And when someone asks, "why did they do this?" The answer is that these houses were built without a licence. When you ask the people of the village why they didn't get licences to build their houses, they say that they tried their best, but the authorities wouldn't even acknowledge anything. Oh great nations of the world, who speak about human rights, freedom, the rights of man and justice, where are you today? This is part of the situation and part of the situation also comes back to us.

The whole world witnessed the slaughter of innocent civilians because of a few missiles that were fired the other way. We all condemned those missiles, and we all condemn any missiles being aimed at civilians, but there were unfortunately three other wars being waged other than the war that you watched on television. There was a battle going on between the different organisations within Palestine; I'm not convinced that any of them has the right. Yes, the proportion of being closer to the truth is greater with some of them than with others, maybe some of them have done more injustice than the other, but the crime that they all perpetrated and for which they are all guilty is that they decide not to stand today.

It is the custom of Allah in his creation that He will not choose for this authority or imamate, someone who will sleep at night thinking 'I'm not going to reconcile myself with my brother tomorrow.' Yes, you can say something to the person wrongly, you can ask for an apology, you can say that you have to put yourself straight, that's one thing. But to sleep with the intention that there is no way of reconciliation, that is not the description attributed to the people that God will choose.

The other battle being fought and being waged is the one between the different states in the region. There was an axis between the Iranians and the Syrians, and another alliance between some other states. And each of the states had their own alliances and their own agendas, which they gave precedence to over the problem of Palestine. And the third battle, which is even more hurtful, and more painful, was the battle between the governments and their opposition in whose propaganda could get the street with them. Each one was trying to win popularity over the other; the government and the opposition. The governments and their opposition, be it Islamic, secular, nationalistic, as Dr Abdul Hakim was saying earlier, all of them were just trying to win popularity and were exploiting what was going on in Palestine to gain the popularity of the street. The battle that they were waging between themselves was so intense that they were probably spending more effort on that battle than trying to resolve the problem of the blood being shed in Gaza.

As for the states of the hearts during that war, and the hearts of the place where God's gaze is focussed. How many hearts were there, waiting for God to bring relief, to alleviate the suffering? And how many tried to reason, to bring alleviation to the suffering by rectifying themselves? How many people transcended looking at who is responsible, who is not responsible, who is treacherous, who has wronged the other and who is right and just looked at themselves and said, "what part do I have to play in this?"

We read in history that a victory was held back, and within the ranks of the people in that army was Sayidna Umar al Khattab. We hear that a victory was held back, because a member of the people in the army had stopped the 'Sunna' (custom) of using the 'Miswaq'. How many of us lie? How many of us betray one another? How many of us steal? How many of us are ok with ourselves when we go to sleep, feeling full of rancour and hate for someone else. How many of us go to sleep, feeling better than other people, thinking ourselves better than other people, thinking that our understanding is better, thinking our rank is loftier, thinking that 'I'm going to be saved, and everyone else is in a mess and they are all going to be destroyed'? How many of us think in that state?

The room is crammed and people are feeling hot, so I don't want to carry on with the appraisal of the situation. But there is just one word that I wanted to say about the situation that we are in. There is a battle that has two sides. Listen attentively to these words: a side that thinks that in their hand is power; their right to might. And the other side that sees that their right is truth itself. On which side will you sleep tonight; in which camp will you sleep in tonight? So some see that their right is might, as long as you have the power in your hands all the rights are yours. While some see that their strength and their power is to stand with the truth. The apparent world around us is just a stage for this battle, and it is the custom of God, that those who see that they have to stand with truth, it is God's custom on Earth they will be the people who inherit it. Remember when we had the caricatures of the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him. One young man asked me why the scholars and myself condemned the burning of the Danish embassy in Syria. We said, because this is against the truth, God hasn't permitted such an action. And the young man said to me "yes you are right, in the Shari'a this is wrong, but in our world today, people don't understand anything but this language, so let's do this so that they see that we have some strength and respect us." With this way of thinking, I try to find an excuse for these young people because they are angry and upset and they feel it in their hearts; they feel hot. But what is the difference between us and the oppressor if we both think in the same way? How can we await the victory of God? The victory of God comes to those who stand for the truth, and God's way isn't given victory by people who act through sin. God doesn't give victory to those who sin, and God's way is not given victory through sin. But to give victory to truth is by standing with truth. To be firm in one's resolve, to stand by the truth in this time is a struggle or 'Jihad'. People say that we shouldn't say the word 'Jihad' too much, but no, we should mention it so that people understand it. The way we live today makes people angry; it is natural to feel angry. Whoever can see all of this going on, transpiring, and doesn't feel angry isn't even a human being. Imam al Shafi

said, 'someone who seldom rouses to anger, and doesn't get angry is just a donkey.' But Imam al Shafi knew the saying of the Prophet 'don't be angry.' And he knew that in the description of the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, that he wouldn't get angry for himself, but if the rights of Allah were violated, he would be angered, and no one would stand in front of his anger. So what was Imam Shafi saying that when he said, 'whoever is roused to get angry, and doesn't get angry is a donkey'? He is saying that in a healthy human being, if someone were angered they would get angry. And the teachers of the Prophet came to teach us that the crux isn't whether you get angry or not, it's how you deal with your anger when you are angry. One of the scholars commented on the saying of the Prophet 'don't be angry', meaning don't just let your anger come out, hold yourself together. There is a meaning, which may be even more subtle or rarefied: when he said 'don't be angry' he meant 'don't let your anger lead you' because if you can harness your anger properly, you can use it as means to elevate yourself.

When I see what is going on with our brothers and sisters in Palestine, I feel angry. But I think to myself, this anger which is an energy and a power, how can I use it to be constructive and not to destroy and not to level things? How do you rectify and put things straight instead of making crooked people even more crooked or making the problem worse? How can I use the power of anger to rectify myself first? How can I turn the power of my anger inwards so I can use it to elevate myself towards God? In a moment of earnestness or honesty with God, of being inspired with insight from God, I would be able to discern when my anger is for God alone, and when my anger is to express the hate I have inside me or to let out steam.

Those of us who were here in the previous gathering in the very same hall, when we spoke about chivalry and the example said by Imam Ali, we mentioned the story of Imam Ali, when he was fighting someone who had aggressed against him, and at the moment when Sayidna Ali had the upper hand and it looked like he was going to strike the man with his sword, the man spat in Imam Ali's face, and Imam Ali walked away from the situation; he didn't do anything to him. And when he was asked why, when he had the upper hand, he didn't finish it there and then, he said "when I was fighting before that, I was fighting him for the sake of God, but when he spat in my face, I feared that I would kill him out of anger for what he had done to me."

Every act we do in order to help the oppressed, and in order to rectify things, and to rectify injustice, should be done on this principle: that we walk on the part of truth by the truth itself, and we have to look at ourselves, and check ourselves, and see if we are doing this for the sake of truth or whether we are doing this for the fervour of the 'Jahiliya' (ignorance) that Sheikh Abdul Hakim was talking about before. We have windows of action that are open before us right now, but we have to do it with this in our hearts. Spend of your money; spend of the best of your money. Teach your children to spend from the money that they have been gathering and saving. I know a number of children who have emptied their little savings; this is to nurture your children to help the truth. But tell me this, who of us in giving money to Gaza, constrained himself in his spending, wasn't as luxurious as he would usually be in order to give a bit more money to the people in Gaza? A young man said

to me, "Oh Sheikh, when you say that: what am I going to save? One thousand, two thousand here and there, it's not going to do anything, they need a lot more, talk to one of those millionaires!" God doesn't need any of this, God is independent, He is rich, and He doesn't need any of our money, He can enrich the people of Gaza Himself. But we give, because we need to give. Be aware of giving because you think you are doing someone a favour, you are giving because we need to give; we need Allah to see us giving. Money alone isn't enough, because the problem isn't just a problem of money, but rather your skills that you have gained in your studies, and in your work environment.

You should tell the truth about Gaza and other places, in two ways: That you should be meticulous when you do your jobs, for the sake of God alone. Because when your work mates know you to be someone who doesn't think anything of lying, cheating, taking back-handers, how are they going to believe you when you start saying things like 'the BBC isn't covering the news properly, the BBC is lying' when what they are used to of you is lies. The second thing is your area of expertise; you should think of how you can use it to help the truth; this is important. When the Arabs claimed from 1948 onwards that Palestine is their cause, and they forgot that many Muslims who are non Arab also have a connection to this cause, and they forgot at the same time, the Christians who make up a huge number of Palestine's population also have a stake in this cause, and instead they started flexing their muscles and saying that they are going to wipe out Israel, were led from compromise to compromise and from one defeat to the next.

God awakened the hearts of believers and other people in the world, that this is a just cause that needs our support. And the new thing in this last battle is that God raised the awareness in people's minds and hearts and in people of all races, all creeds and from all nations that this is a just cause. And you now have partners from all over the world in this cause. We have seen the media coverage, and it is just the tip of the iceberg. A lot of people in this country, who are non-Muslims, went out with a lot of passion in order to support this cause. The press even covered the images of a Jewish Rabbi in the streets of London, burning his Israeli passport saying, "I can't belong to such a nation." We saw images of Jewish women standing outside the Israeli embassy in Australia because they were against what was going on. We have seen thousands of Jews in New York walking out and protesting against the actions that were perpetrated. This is the support of God, and the victory given by God because of the justness of this cause, in that He calls on people who are actually related by faith and by blood to the perpetrators, and He brought them to the point where they could transcend their relation to the perpetrators and stand for the truth. But here is something that God is telling us also; God is saying 'I'm showing people the justness of this cause even to people who are related to those who are perpetrating the injustice by blood'. So be aware if you should have actions or intentions that would adulterate this cause, as the fact that God has made it so plain to see that this is a just cause, is an indication that the resolution will come soon. This makes us happy, but it is also something that we should be worried about, and the thing that should be feared, is that anyone who gets involved in trying to help this cause, but does something that adulterates it, and violates it, will be removed from the

sight of God. So work to help this cause, on the basis that it is the cause of truth, not that it is your cause.

Those of you who work in law, solicitors and otherwise, should work with the other lawyers and solicitors who are trying to bring the people who perpetrated the injustices to justice. And the person of you, who is a journalist and works in the media, should work hard to ensure that the world knows what's going on. The teachers amongst you should teach the children the justice of this cause. Those amongst you, who have a wide social network, should use that social network to show people that this is a just cause. And all of you, every night, should turn to God.

People's hopes were pinned on Obama, when he came to power as before they were pinned on other people. It's about time we pinned our hopes on God. We see good things in that fact that Obama is reawakening the principles of the founding fathers of America and the values that they set. And we are also happy that America has transcended some of its ethnic problems and is giving people their due based on merit. But we shouldn't pin our hope on anything but God. We have grown weary and tired of pinning our hopes on other than God; it's about time we pin our hopes on God. Whoever awakens and goes to sleep with his hope pinned solely on God, won't be content to have actions that contradict his hope. Turn to Him with your impotence, and he will give you strength by His strength. Turn to Him with your impotence, He will give you power by His power. Turn to him with your poverty and He will give you from His richness, turn to Him in repentance that He may relent towards you. Show Him your honesty in wanting to do goodness to everyone around you. Increase the goodness in yourself and so in the world around you. There are people who have done little actions or actions that will look insignificant to others, that will be enormous in the after life; amongst them, as is recounted in one of the traditions of the Prophet, a person of ill-repute who will abide in the heaven because they quenched the thirst of a thirsty dog, and another who prayed and will go to hell because they stabbed a cat to death.

Send letters to your brothers and sisters in Palestine, support them, show them your support, pray for them, remind them of God and remember through the honest ones amongst them how to be firm and have a strong resolve in your relation to God. Help them to overcome their divisions, address them with hearts that are all united in order to bring them back together. I asked Habib Umar how we can bring the nation together, he said, "no one can bring their community together outwardly except the one in whom the community is gathered inwardly." So extend towards them all and to all those around you. Can you love even when you are angry? Do 'Jihad', struggle against yourself to love even when you are angry. Enliven in your hearts the meaning of being merciful, even when you are angry, even towards your enemy. Listen to what I am saying, I know it is heavy for people to carry; I know a lot of people don't want to hear it. I could make you say 'Takbir' or glorify God, then get up, and go sit down; it's easy to talk to people. But what you say is a trust given by God. If you can look with compassion and mercy even towards your enemies, God will give you victory.

Even if a day comes when you find yourself on opposite sides of the battle line; look at yourself, check yourselves at that moment. Would you prefer that he be guided, or would you prefer to kill him? Would you prefer that he returns to the truth, or would you prefer to exact vengeance on him? Hind, the daughter of Utba, mutilated the body of Hamza and took out his liver and chewed it, to take vengeance on the Prophet of God and because of her rancour towards the Prophet of God. But when she came to him as a Muslim, regretful of the murder she had committed and the injustice that she had done. He accepted her, and he didn't even make her feel slighted or ashamed of what she had done. But he made her feel good that she had accepted the truth, to the point that she felt at ease to discuss with him the details of the pledge between them. When the command of God came that they should all give him a pledge that none of them would ascribe partners to God, and likewise that no one would commit adultery and therefore not give birth to illegitimate children. The Prophet said, "Will you give me an oath that you will do that?" She said, "Yes, I give my oath of allegiance that I will never ascribe partners to God." And he said, "and will you also give me your pledge that you will never commit adultery?" She answered, "Oh messenger of God, does a free woman even think of doing such an act?" So she felt ok to discuss with him and to say to him, "how could you even ask me to give you a pledge of such a thing that I would never even dream of?" The day before, she felt that her life was threatened, now she feels comfortable enough to begin discussing and negotiating with him. That's the heart of the Prophet of God. God says 'We didn't send you except as a mercy to the worlds.'

By the degree that you make your hearts receptive to receive from His heart and to receive His attributes, then God will choose you to be people He gives victory to. If the people of falsehood beat you temporarily in your wealth and in your person and in honour, never let the day come when they defeat you in your heart, because the hope for gaining victory on the Earth, and in your possessions and in your honour has to begin in the heart. If we justify why they've had this victory by saying that it's because of the backing of the big countries, because of what they have, because of their equipment, that's fine, but what is your excuse for them defeating you in your heart. Give victory to God in your heart, and God will be pleased and will choose you to give victory to the truth on Earth. I conclude by asking each of us to say, seventy times in the morning and seventy times in the evening, 'Hasbi Allahu wa ni'mal wakil' with the intention that we want to give victory to the truth more than our hatred for falsehood.

About Habib Ali al-Jifri

Habib 'Ali Zain Al Abideen Al Jifri was born into a family of noble lineage extending in an unbroken chain to Imam Husayn (ra), the grandson of the Prophet (saw). Habib 'Ali is from the majestic city of Tarim, South Yemen. Nestled in the ancient valley of Hadramawt, Tarim has been a center of learning and spirituality for centuries. Habib 'Ali received a classical Islamic education from the illustrious scholars of Hadramauwt, embodying a methodology which crystallizes the middle way of Islam, Islamic Jurisprudence, a respect for the differences between jurists and a spiritual education drawn from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Habib 'Ali is Founder of the 'Taba Foundation for Islamic Studies and Research' based in the United Arab Emirates. He is also a lecturer at Dar Al Mustafa, Tarim, an educational institute established for the study of traditional Islamic sciences. Habib 'Ali is continually invited to lecture in many countries across the globe and appears regularly on a variety network television and radio programs.

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